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INFO RUCNOSC/ORG FOR SECURITY CO OP IN EUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USOSCE 000164

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2019

TAGS: PREL PINS RU OSCE

SUBJECT: OSCE MINISTERIAL LAUNCHES "CORFU PROCESS"

Classified By: CDA Kyle Scott for reasons 1.4(B)&(D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The first-ever "informal" OSCE Ministerial debated European security issues on June 27-28, revealing a broad convergence among most delegations in support of the U.S. approach that current European security institutions remain sound (but could be improved), and that discussions on any adjustments should be carried on within the OSCE to take advantage of its broad geographic scope and its comprehensive security approach involving not just military security but also the economic and human dimensions of security.

Near-term steps were considered important to restore trust and confidence badly shaken by last August's war in the South Caucasus and the stalemate in the CFE regime. Many countries encouraged greater focus on new threats that are felt most by average citizenry, such as energy security, economic uncertainty, the challenges posed by immigration, terrorism, and cybercrime. With little to no support from other countries, FM Lavrov of Russia stood alone in espousing a radically different view, and continued to insist on a new European Security Treaty (EST) to address fundamental shortcomings in the current security architecture of Europe. Despite the difference in substance, the Greek Chairman-in-Office concluded the debate was fruitful enough to declare "The Corfu Process" a success and to instruct the Greek Chairmanship to lead a more intensive review of European security throughout the fall in the OSCE in order to pave the way for further ministerial consideration at the December Athens Ministerial of the OSCE. END SUMMARY.

An OSCE First: An "Informal" Ministerial

¶2. (SBU) The Corfu gathering was the first-ever "informal" meeting of ministers from the OSCE's 56 participating States, and attracted a strong turnout. It was preceded immediately by a gathering of the NATO-Russia Council. Deputy Secretary James Steinberg led the U.S. delegation, and was joined by A/S Phil Gordon and NSC Europe Senior Director Liz Sherwood-Randall. The original impetus for the gathering was Russian President Medvedev's 2008 call for a new framework for European security (including a European Security Treaty), but last August's Russia-Georgia War gave new urgency to the need to review security in Europe. The Greek Chair based its approach on the informal luncheon discussion of broad European security issues held at the December 2008 Helsinki Ministerial, modeling it loosely on the EU's "Gymnich"-style meetings.

The Three R's

¶3. (SBU) The Greek CiO shaped the agenda around three R's: "Reconfirm, Review, Renovate." They sought to have the OSCE recommit to the basic principles of behavior enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, review how countries are fulfilling their commitments in all three dimensions of OSCE engagement (political-military, economic/environmental, and human

dimensions of security), and brainstorm on possible changes or adjustments to improve the situation in order to restore trust and chart a way forward for cooperation in the Eurasian security space.

Broad Convergence of Views

14. (C) Although nuances were apparent, there was a broad convergence of views among most OSCE participating States. Many rallied around the points presented by Deputy Secretary Steinberg: the OSCE's principles remain sound, its three-pillar comprehensive approach is the right one, and the root of the problem is not the institutions themselves but the failure to take advantage of the tools at our disposal to resolve problems in the OSCE region. More work may be needed to focus on newer security challenges that resonate with the public, such as terrorism, radicalization, energy security, climate change, immigration, and economic dislocation. And we should not hesitate to improve old tools or create new ones as required. Positive steps on CFE and Georgia would also help restore trust. (Montenegrin FM coined the current situation of lack of mutual confidence as "The New Mistrust.") The human dimension remained an important element of European security that deserved equal attention. Through a dinner discussion and two working sessions the next day, speaker after speaker made similar points.

Russia Remains Odd Man Out

15. (C) Despite the overwhelming sentiment in favor of this

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approach, Russian FM Lavrov continued to argue Russia's case for a radical departure on security in Europe, and to express caution about a central role for the OSCE in European security discussions. He proclaimed that the principle of "indivisibility" of security -- in which OSCE states pledged not to enhance their security at the expense of others -- had effectively collapsed, replaced by NATO and EU enlargement at Russia's expense. (In response, the Deputy Secretary noted that indivisibility of security went hand in hand with the sovereign right of every country to choose its own security arrangements; these were two sides of the same coin. Similarly, Georgian FM Vashadze argued that NATO and EU enlargements had rendered Europe more, not less, secure and stable.) Russia believes the OSCE's comprehensive approach has become imbalanced, with 80 percent of OSCE activities allegedly devoted to the human dimension. In other areas, OSCE states applied dual standards: for example worrying about Georgian IDP's, but hardly paying attention to Europe's largest group of IDP's -- Serbs displaced by the war in the Balkans. Lavrov implicitly accused the EU of hypocrisy in seeking to expel the UN from Kosovo, while at the same time complaining about Russian actions that led to the end of UNOMIG in Georgia. (This prompted French FM Kouchner to retort that the comparison was "dishonest.") The all-inclusive security of the OSCE region was now fragmented into various security organizations, including NATO, the EU, OSCE, CIS and CSTO, with no coordination or division of labor, Lavrov stated. He repeated Russia's proposal for a meeting of the secretariats of these five organizations in 2010 -- an idea that only Belarus explicitly endorsed. To reverse the negative trends that Russia perceives, Lavrov advocated a new EST that would aim to turn the political commitments of the OSCE into legally binding obligations. On this issue, he received support only from Belarus, Cyprus, Serbia and to some extent also by Armenia. As an adjunct, Lavrov called for further reforms of the OSCE to turn it into a "normal" international organization.

Focus on Georgia

¶6. (C) Most ministers placed the responsibility squarely on Russia's shoulders for forcing the closure of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, and appealed to FM Lavrov to accept the Greek Chairman's compromise proposal on the monitors. Russia circulated a last-ditch alternative, but most delegations concluded that it offered nothing new and failed the fundamental test of a status neutral proposal. FM Bakoyannis told the Deputy Secretary during their bilateral meeting that she saw nothing new in the proposal, and would reject it in short order during her bilateral meeting with Lavrov. French FM Kouchner appealed to Russia to take the first steps in making progress by allowing the remaining EU Monitoring Mission access across the boundary line. Georgian DFM Bokeria told Charge that Georgia appreciated the strong support it had received.

New Threats: More Emphasis on Energy Security

¶7. (SBU) Most of the speakers called for a major focus on new and emerging threats. While many of the concerns raised (terrorism, globalization, WMD) were included in the OSCE's 2003 Maastricht "Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century," two issues received much more prominent attention at Corfu -- energy security and environmental dangers. Following the gas shut-off to Ukraine this winter, energy security in particular was a matter that was considered ripe for further attention, especially given the OSCE's membership that includes consumer, producer, and transit countries.

Protracted Conflicts

¶8. (SBU) Many speakers also put the spotlight on the protracted conflicts that continue to afflict the OSCE region. Serbian FM Jeremic referred to Kosovo as a "frozen conflict." Most recognized the lack of progress by the OSCE on these issues was a significant failure of the organization, and called for renewed engagement and consideration of new mechanisms and tools to prevent conflict and support resolution.

Bakoyannis Sums Up: "The Corfu Process"

¶9. (SBU) At the end of the meeting, FM Bakoyannis summed up her perception of what had been accomplished and what the

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next steps ought to be. The value of existing commitments and their implementation had been reaffirmed, she said, but there was general consensus to proceed with a "wide-ranging dialogue on security anchored in the OSCE." The goal should be a secure Europe able to respond to threats both old and new. She proposed an initial set of consultations, based in Vienna, to elicit a common understanding, in all three OSCE dimensions, of the "priority threats to our wider security." This would lead to a "more structured and focused" security dialogue that, the results of which would be considered at the Athens Ministerial in early December.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Bakoyannis has set the stage for a detailed review of all the various points raised during the course of the Corfu meetings. This can be expected to carry on throughout the fall. Obtaining a positive outcome will be difficult given Russia's positions, and its antipathy to the OSCE and the "Corfu process" suggests Moscow will continue to focus on its EST proposal rather than measures to improve the OSCE's crisis management and other tools. Nonetheless, in the coming months, the U.S. delegation needs to be prepared to delve into detail on all aspects of comprehensive security in

Europe, including discussions of "priority threats." To do so effectively, we need to become more specific on the ideas we have already presented for improving fulfillment of commitments in the human dimension, possible new mechanisms to deal with conflict prevention and resolution when consensus is absent, future steps on energy and security, and practical steps to strengthen confidence and trust in Georgia. We will also need to decide how we want to proceed on CFE, discussions about which will proceed on a separate track and but which nevertheless remains a part of this effort, especially given Russia's focus on "hard security." Christensen